

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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DODE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 PA-01 USIA-06 PRS-01 TRSE-00
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 06398

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, EEC, UK, FR, PINT, PGOV
SUBJ: BRITISH FOREIGN SECRETARY VISIT TO PARIS
FEBRUARY 25: INFORMAL LUNCH WITH "YOUNGER" SOCIALISTS

REF: PARIS 05862

1. UK HEAD OF CHANCERY, LORD LENNOX-JONES, TELLS US
THAT FOREIGN SECRETARY OWEN'S FEBRUARY 25 PARIS LUNCH
WITH NUMBER OF SOCIALISTS, INCLUDING PS NATIONAL
SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC SECTOR ROCARD, SHOULD NOT BE SEEN
AS SIGNIFICANT GESTURE OR POLICY DEPARTURE.

2. LUNCH'S ANTECEDENTS GO BACK TO LAST DECEMBER. OWEN,
THEN STATE SECRETARY, HAD EXPRESSED INTEREST IN MEETING
SOME "YOUNGER" SOCIALISTS DURING PLANNING FOR FEBRUARY
VISIT WITH QUAI COUNTERPART TAITTINGER. WHEN, AFTER
HIS RECENT ELEVATION TO THE POST OF FOREIGN SECRETARY,
OWEN DETERMINED TO MAKE PARIS VISIT ANYWAY, FONOFF
DECIDED TO KEEP SOCIALIST LUNCH AFTER DISCREETLY CHECK-
ING WITH QUAI AND ELYSEE, WHO HAD NO OBJECTIONS. HOW-
EVER, UK SIDE MADE CONSCIOUS EFFORT KEEP PUBLICITY TO
MINIMUM. LENNOX-JONES ADDS THAT ROCARD WAS INVITED
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BECAUSE OWEN HAD BEEN TAKEN BY HIM IN PREVIOUS CON-
VERSATION. IDEA OF INVITING MITTERAND, OR OTHER MORE
SENIOR SOCIALISTS WAS CONSIDERED BUT REJECTED AS BEING
"A BIT TOO MUCH AT THIS TIME."

3. AS FOR SUBSTANCE OF LUNCH, ALSO ATTENDED BY ANDRE
BOULLOCHE AND EDITH CRESSON, LENNOX-JONES SAID MAIN

THEME WAS EXCHANGE OF VIEWS ON SOCIALIST AND TRADE UNION ISSUES, ALTHOUGH EC MATTERS WERE APPARENTLY ALSO DISCUSSED. HE ADDED THAT UK WAS GENERALLY TRYING STIMULATE GREATER HUMAN CONTACTS AMONG FRENCH AND BRITISH SOCIALISTS AND LABOR PEOPLE TO BREAK DOWN THEIR RESPECTIVE "INSULARITY."

4. AS FOR RESULTS, A UK EMBOFF AND MEMBERS OF SOCIALIST PARTY WHO ATTENDED WERE APPARENTLY EQUALLY DISAPPOINTED. FROM OBSERVATIONS MADE BY MEMBERS OF ROCARD'S STAFF, WE GATHER THAT HE FOUND OWEN "UNINFORMED" IN HIS NEW ROLE AND "UNEDUCATED ON THE HARSHER REALITIES OF EEC ECONOMICS." THUS ROCARD CAME AWAY FROM THE MEETING CONVINCED THAT OWEN DOES NOT UNDERSTAND THE COMPLEX ISSUES INVOLVED IN EC POLICY ON INDUSTRIAL SUBSIDIES AND "THE CONTROL OF INTERNATIONAL CORPORATIONS," OR EXTENT TO WHICH EC "COULD BECOME AN ANTI-SOCIALIST FORCE IN EUROPE"--WHATEVER THAT MEANS.

5. UK EMBOFF WHO SOLICITED US COUNTERPART FOR PS REACTIONS TO THE ROCARD/OWEN MEETING, ALSO CALLED ENCOUNTER "A DISMALLY SAD PASSAGE OF SHIPS IN THE NIGHT." NOTING THAT THE TWO MEN WERE SEPARATED BY STYLE, LOGIC, AND THEIR RESPECTIVE SENSE OF THE POLITICALLY POSSIBLE, UK EMBOFF SUGGESTED THAT OWEN

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HAD BEEN "APPALLED BY ROCARD'S VISIONARY ATTITUDE AND BY HIS INTELLECTUAL AND IDEOLOGICAL RIGIDITY." EMBOFF SUMMARIZED HIS SENSE OF THE MEETING BY SAYING THAT "OUR MAN WAS TALKING POLITICS WHILE ROCARD WAS TALKING FOR PARTY USE."

6. COMMENT: IN SPITE OF SCATTERED PRESS REFERENCES, OWEN'S SOCIALIST LUNCH HAS ATTRACTED MARGINAL PUBLIC ATTENTION. ROCARD'S REACTION TO OWEN IS NOT PARTICULARLY SURPRISING, SINCE HE HAS NEVER BEEN KNOWN FOR A PRO-BRITISH ATTITUDE AND HAS LONG ATTACKED THE LABOR PARTY AS "REVISIONIST AND A CATCH-ALL BRAND OF SOCIAL DEMOCRACY." WHAT IS MORE CURIOUS IS THAT ROCARD APPARENTLY LET HIS DIFFERENCES SHOW AT A TIME WHEN HE IS TRYING HARD TO PRESENT HIMSELF AS RESPECTABLE AND RESPONSIBLE.

7. IF, AS WE ARE TOLD, OWEN'S REACTIONS TO ROCARD WERE EVIDENTLY EQUALLY DISAPPOINTING, THIS SHOULD PROVIDE EVEN MORE REASON TO BROADEN CONTACTS WITH FRENCH SOCIALISTS TO IMPROVE UNDERSTANDING.

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